



May 12, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairperson House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H-8489, Relating to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Rhode Island – 2026 Bond Referenda - Support

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs and our local Club Organizations serving Rhode Island, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H-8489, the proposed \$36 million bond to invest in Boys & Girls Clubs facilities across the state.

For over 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs have worked to ensure that all young people, especially those who need us most, have access to safe, supportive places where they can learn, grow, and prepare for a successful future. Today in Rhode Island, 27 Club locations serve more than 31,000 youth annually, including over 2,000 young people each day. Clubs serve as essential community infrastructure, supporting families, strengthening the future workforce, and providing stability during the most critical hours of a child's day.

Across Rhode Island, young people are facing significant and increasing challenges. Data shows that:

- Three in four middle and high school students report not discussing careers in school,
- Three in four eighth graders are not proficient in math,
- One in five students reports experiencing bullying, and
- Two in five worry about school violence.

At the same time, demand for high-quality out-of-school-time programs continues to outpace available access. Families need safe, reliable places for their children. Teens need meaningful pathways to careers. Communities need trusted institutions that can respond to rising mental health needs and academic recovery gaps.

Boys & Girls Clubs are uniquely positioned to meet these needs. Our proven programs deliver measurable results: 96% of Club teens expect to graduate high school, 93% report having a trusted adult to turn to, and 96% say they feel safe at their Club. These outcomes are not

accidental, they are the result of intentional investments in safe spaces, caring staff, and high-quality programming.

H 8489 would help Clubs fund critical capital improvements, renovations, and expansions at Boys & Girls Club facilities statewide. These projects include:

- Upgrades to summer camp facilities and infrastructure in Pawtucket and Newport,
- Renovation and modernization of aging Clubhouses in Providence and East Providence,
- Creation of specialized and inclusive spaces, including a neurodivergent Club in Warwick,
- Development of a workforce training center serving hundreds of teens annually in Cumberland and Lincoln, and
- Enhancements to athletic fields, outdoor recreation, and community spaces at Clubs across the state.

Modern, well-equipped spaces directly enable stronger programming. Through this bond Boys & Girls Clubs will be able to expand access to programs by increasing capacity to serve more young people. Clubs will offer targeted programs and strengthen workforce development pathways through dedicated career-readiness spaces. Clubs will improve safety, accessibility, and inclusivity for all young people and help support sustainability and long-term cost efficiency through infrastructure upgrades. Collectively, these improvements will allow Clubs to reach more young people, respond to more complex needs, and achieve even stronger outcomes.

This investment will strengthen communities across Rhode Island. When young people have access to safe spaces, mentorship, and enrichment opportunities, we see improved academic outcomes, reduced risky behaviors, and stronger, more resilient communities. These are outcomes that not only benefit youth, but also Rhode Island's economy and long-term growth.

We believe that great futures start in safe, supportive spaces. This bond will help open the door to those futures for thousands more Rhode Island youth. We respectfully urge your support for H-8489. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to Rhode Island's children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.R. Kenny". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

J.R. Kenny
Director, Government Relations
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Rhode Island Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs